

Ablepharus lineatus (Bell)

Form slender, elongate, the distance between the tip of the snout and the fore limb $2\frac{1}{2}$ in the distance between the axilla and the groin. Eye incompletely surrounded by granules. Rostral slightly projecting, narrowly in contact with the frontonasal, which has a wide suture with the frontal. Prefrontals small, widely separated; frontal nearly as long as its distance from the tip of the snout, in contact with 2 or 3 supraoculars; frontoparietals and interparietal distinct; interparietal much larger than the frontoparietals; 3 pairs of nuchals; 3 upper labials in front of the slightly enlarged subocular. Ear opening very small. Scales smooth, dorsals largest, 2 enlarged preanals. Limbs short, fore limb with 2 digits, hind limb with 3, the adpressed limbs fail to meet; hind limb as long as the distance between the front of the eye and the fore limb.

Whitish, the two vertebral series of scales each with a dark streak forming a double band from the head on to the tail. A wide dark dorsolateral band extends from the nostril through the eye and over the ear to the tail, under surface pale cream, immaculate, limbs inclined to be reddish.

Known from Perth, Rottnest and Garden Islands.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FROM JIGALONG, NORTH-WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By ERIC LINDGREN, West Perth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Jigalong Mission lies on the edge of the Gibson Desert at lat. $23^{\circ} 24'$ S. and long. $120^{\circ} 46'$ W. It is about 280 miles north of Meekatharra, 50 miles north-east of Mundiwindi, and is 33 miles east of the Great Northern Highway.

Geologically Jigalong is situated in the area of the Nullagine Series (Pre-Cambrian) of sedimentary and metamorphosed rocks. These are predominantly sandstones, quartzites and conglomerates, but here and there are later intrusions of igneous rocks, notably quartz (Jutson, 1956).

To the west of the mission are low undulating hills covered mostly by "spinifex" (*Triodia* sp.) and Mulga (*Acacia aneura*), while to the east lies a series of broken ridges, outliers of the nearby Robertson Range, over which according to the natives "the desert begins."

Lying in an area of rainfall averaging between 5 in. and 10 in., Jigalong is officially in the desert country. Rainfall is very erratic, there being marked peaks every five or so years, with drought and semi-drought conditions in between.

Temperatures range up to 120° F. during the summer months, when most of the rain falls, and down to about 45° F. in the winter, accompanied by chill easterly winds. Regular rains can be relied

upon during the winter months also (a later paper on birds of the area gives more detailed rainfall data).

HISTORICAL

Historically Jigalong itself offers little as it was not established until 1907. The general area, however, holds many associations with the past. Giles was the first to pass nearby, when in 1876, returning to South Australia, he travelled about 50 miles to the south, near Savory Creek.

Calvert's Exploring Expedition, led by L. A. Wells, next visited the area in 1896. This party passed by farther to the east, and at Separation Well two members, G. F. Wells and G. L. Jones, left the main group to survey the country to the west and rejoin their companions at Joanna Springs. These two men lost their lives in the vicinity of Talawana, some 60 miles north of Jigalong, and a number of search parties set out to recover the bodies. One such party, led by Rudall (1897), came within 15 miles of Jigalong. At Braeside Station, farther north, Rudall learned that ". . . Messrs. Connaughton and Henty had been sent by Mr. Magarey's instructions with horses to search the western branch of the Oakover." The same Connaughton visited the rockhole described in the article below and left his name carved in to the rock face. This visit was a few months prior to Wells and Jones' disappearance.

Further exploration by F. H. Hann (in 1897), when he named Lake Disappointment, and R. H. B. Downes (in 1899) added to the knowledge of the area.

In 1904 A. W. Canning surveyed the route for the No. 1 Rabbit Proof Fence and in 1906 the Canning Stock Route. In 1908 Talbot made a comprehensive geological survey of the desert region (Talbot, 1928). The period of exploration by Canning and Talbot coincides with that of the construction of the No. 1 Rabbit Proof Fence, from Starvation Boat Harbour on the south coast to Bannangarra on the north.

With the establishment of the fence depots were installed from which regular maintenance patrols took place. Jigalong was one such depot, being the main central depot on the northern section of the fence, from which boundary riders patrolled south as far as the north shore of Lake Nabberu, and north to the coast. Camels were used on these patrols and Jigalong became a camel breeding station, some camels being sent to Kalgoorlie for use by the survey party mapping a route for the Trans-Continental Railway.

Constructed by the Public Works Department, the fence was completed on September 30, 1907, and on December 1, 1907, the final northern section, including Jigalong, came under the control of the Department of Agriculture.

Under the direction of the Native Welfare Department the superintendent at Jigalong was appointed Protector of Aborigines and rations were issued to the native people gathered about the depot. This continued until the establishment of the mission nearby by the Apostolic Church of Australia.

Original negotiations to establish a mission somewhere in the Nullagine-Marble Bar area made in 1941 were curtailed by World War II. It was not until 1944 that a further request was made by the Apostolic Church. Selection of a site proved difficult, the area east of Nullagine being favoured as a point where desert natives could be intercepted and cared for in their drift westwards. However in September 1945 the then Commissioner for Native Affairs, Mr. F. Bray, suggested the Vermin Control Depot at Jigalong as a site.

This was accepted by the church and a permit was issued for the establishment of a mission on Reserve 20285 on December 5, 1945. This reserve of 16,000 acres was known as Watch Point Paddock. Since that time, through the closure of station holdings nearby, the area of the reserve has been increased to about 500,000 acres.

The name Jigalong is now freely applied to the mission, while the original depot, three miles to the south, is known as "Old Jigalong."

Very little is available on the natural history of the district. In the 1920s James Hickmer, an employee of the Jigalong depot, collected insects and a live colony of honey ants from him was exhibited at a meeting of the Royal Society of W.A. by John Clark in September 1922. Perhaps other material from the same source may have been published elsewhere, but he is not mentioned in Musgrave's *Bibliography of Australian Entomology 1775-1930*. Only two recent workers have published natural history notes on the area: R. D. Royce (1948), who patrolled the fence north of Jigalong with George Beattie, the local Inspector of Rabbits, and published botanical notes, and J. H. Calaby, who was in the vicinity in September 1955, and has published some data on frogs and birds (Calaby, 1958; Main and Calaby, 1957).

The present series of articles are written from material gathered whilst I was on duty at the Government School from February to December, 1959.

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II. ABORIGINAL ROCK PAINTINGS NEAR JIGALONG.

LOCALITY

The drawings described are situated at a temporary rockhole, known to the *Mantjiltjara* and *Katatjara* natives at Jigalong Mission as *Ngutjapungkanu*. This rockhole lies in the Robertson Range about three-quarters of a mile east of the 638 mile peg on the No. 1 Rabbit Proof Fence, on the western edge of the Gibson Desert.

Robertson Range is comprised of sandstones, conglomerates and grits (Talbot, 1928) and these drawings are situated on vertical and semi-vertical rock faces and overhangs on the east side of the rockhole. No doubt the west side would have been utilised too but no satisfactory sites are available.

Two white people visiting the area have inscribed their names in the rock faces: J. Connaughton, 29/4/96, and A. J. Keeling, 10/5/31. Connaughton has been mentioned above. Keeling was superintendent at Jigalong during the early 1930s.

MEDIA

Most of the drawings appear to be done with white ochre and are very faint. Near one drawing the rockface was eroded into a finely pitted surface which when rubbed resulted in a white powder line very similar in appearance to the drawing. This could only be done at the one spot.

The only bichrome drawing is that shown in Fig 1 (a), which is executed in white ochre on a background of red ochre.

Detailed measurements were taken of all the drawings and from these they were reproduced firstly on squared paper, then traced on cartridge paper for reproduction in this article.

No attempt has been made to show the width of the lines on the reproductions here, these generally being approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide and probably done with a finger dipped in colour. The Emu footprint, Fig. 1 (b), had a maximum width of $1\frac{1}{2}$ in.